sure he read it at some point.[620] No witnesses recall discussing the newspaper story with the

Secretary, or seeing him read McCain's letter.

Approximately 41 days elapsed from McCain's letter to Babbitt's response. Witnesses

stated, however, that responding to McCain was a priority. Explanations for the delay included

the length and detail of the response, the Secretary's travel schedule, summer vacation for

involved personnel, the fact that the Senate was in recess in August, and the lack of any

particular pressure, including from reporters, for a faster response.[621]

e. McCain's Reaction to the Responses

After McCain read the responses to his letters on the Hudson matter from Quinn, Ickes

and Babbitt, he decided his Committee need take no further action on the Hudson matter.

McCain said that he based this decision on the representations in those responses – particularly

Secretary Babbitt's letter and the attachments to it. McCain did not distribute the responses to

the other members of the Committee on Indian Affairs; McCain said he was satisfied that, based

on the responses received, no further action was necessary. McCain told investigators that he

read Babbitt's denial of the allegations concerning Eckstein as a flat denial that Babbitt had said

anything to Eckstein about Ickes at Babbitt's meeting with Eckstein on July 14, 1995. McCain

added that he understood Babbitt's letter of Aug. 30, 1996, to be a rejection of the allegations in

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[620]Leshy said normal DOI practice was to submit copies of both the incoming
correspondence and the DOI draft response to the signer of a letter. As to whether the Secretary
would be presented a copy of the incoming letter along with the outgoing letter to be signed,
Shields said it is so rare for Secretary Babbitt to sign a letter, she cannot say what the standard
procedure would be.

[621]McCain and his staff thought that the length of time Babbitt took to respond was
unusual, and recalled that McCain's office did not receive Babbitt's letter until well into
September.